

We Care For The Country

# Ag Policy Watch



## MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

### MFBBF

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee

My name is John Youngberg and I represent the Montana Farm Bureau. When I started working for Montana Farm Bureau 15 years ago there were rumblings in the country that MSU, Montana's land grant university, was losing its focus on agriculture. Student enrolment numbers were declining in the College of Agriculture, facilities on campus and in the Ag Experiment Stations were eroding, and other areas of the campus were being prioritized ahead of them for upgrade. Research priorities were changing and cuts in the Extension Service and research stations budgets were making MSU less attractive as an institution for students. By 1998 a number of ag organizations joined Montana Farm Bureau on a task force to Study the Ag Focus at MSU.

Several recommendations were discussed, prioritized and forwarded to the University. Many of these recommendations are being addressed such as repairs to Linfield Hall, expanding the curriculum, (equine program) scholarship increases and graduate student activities. One issue that has not been addressed is the erosion of the Montana Ag Experiment Station and Extension Service budget due to recharge. Currently this recharge, direct charge, overhead, whatever you call it is consuming 8% of the experiment stations budget before they spend a dime for research. All facets of the university pay these charges, but the agencies (MAES and Extension) are the only units of the university not able to recoup these charges through tuition increases and increased prices. Examples: Dorms, SUB, stadium. Other divisions are credited money back.

In part this issue is a result of years of not allowing the Agencies present law adjustments. To his credit Governor Schweitzer has included PLA in his proposed budget to cover increases during the next biennium. The problem lies in the fact that over the past 10-15 years overhead has grown to nearly \$1 million for AES and \$600,000 for Extension and has not been addressed.

Montana's Agricultural organizations would like to see MSU return to its place of prominence in ag education and research. These two goals can be jointly addressed as suggested by Provost Dave Dooley in his statement that MSU is

“working toward a research experience for every student.” It will not be accomplished if we continue to strangle both the College of Ag and Experiment Stations as well as the Extension Service with onerous recharges.

What's the answer.

- 1) Insure PLA in every budget to cover increased costs.
- 2) Credits to MAES for contributions to MSU the same as research division
- 3) Infusion of money into the MAES and Extension Base budget to make up for 15 years of no PLA.

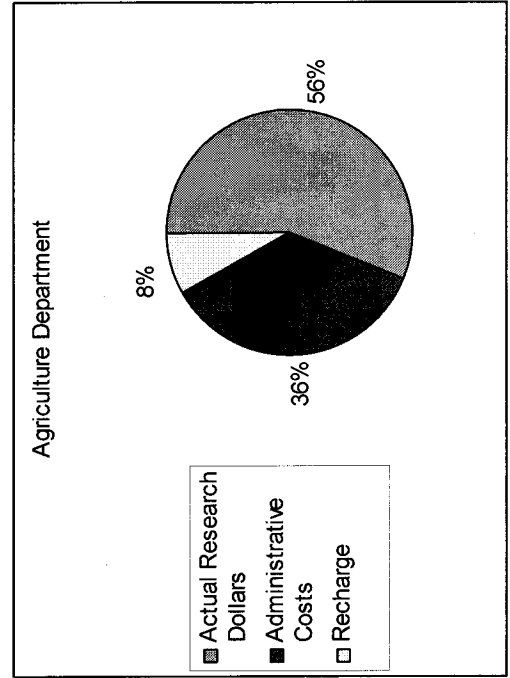
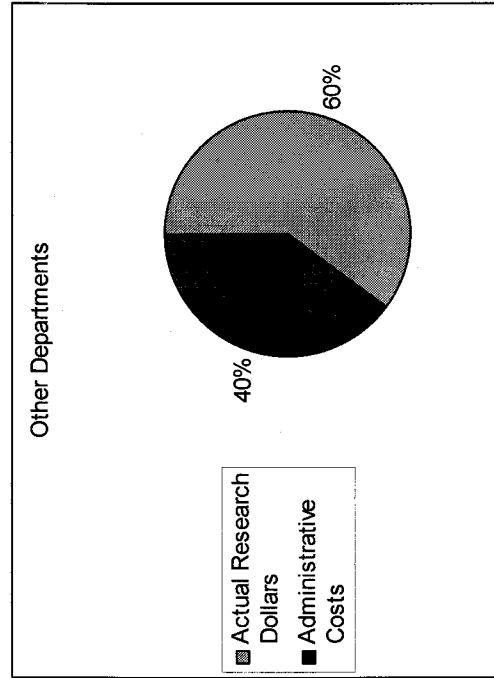
I have presented to you a copy of the 1998 study and a handout showing the effects of the recharge on the ag experiment stations. I have volumes of information and would be glad to answer any questions

on list 1

# RECHARGE ROBS RESEARCH

Are all departments created equal at Montana State University?

Where does the money go?



## Things to Consider:

- Graduate students doing agriculture research get smaller percentages of their grant money than graduate students in other departments at MSU.
- Many agriculture instructors share research and teaching positions.
- MAES and the College of Agriculture account for 30 million of research dollars, yet get no credit against that money towards recharge.